DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 341 CS 207 512

AUTHOR Lally, Tim D. P.; And Others
TITLE Written Communication Apprehension III: Treatment of Writing Apprehension in the Classroom.
SPONS AGENCY University of South Alabama, Mobile.
PUB DATE Mar 83
GRANT 3-61245
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Meeting of the Southwest Division of the American Business Communication Association (Houston, TX, March 10-12, 1983).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *Positive Reinforcement; Prewriting; Sentence Combining; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods; *Technical Writing; *Writing Apprehension; *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Invention (Rhetorical)

ABSTRACT

Once its source has been identified using the multidimensional model developed by D. W. Stacks, R. W. Boozer, and T. D. P. Lally, writing apprehension, especially among business writing students, can be treated in the classroom with specific pedagogical techniques. Emphasizing the writing process rather than the product--stressing peer and teacher responses to writing instead of graded teacher evaluations, for example--establishes a supportive classroom atmosphere, thereby reducing general negative attitudes toward writing. Sentence-combining exercises encourage greater complexity and variety in apprehensive writers' styles. Prewriting work in invention helps overcome "blank page paralysis," while the workshop and case study methods increase positive attitudes toward business writing and improve student perceptions of their own competence and their writing's potential value to their field. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED233341

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION III: TREATMENT OF WRITING APPREHENSION IN THE CLASSROOM

Tim D. P. Lally

Robert W. Boozer

Don W. Stacks

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Tim D. P. Lally

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Tim D. P. Lally (Ph.D., SUNY-Stony Brook, 1980) is assistant professor of English, Robert W. Boozer (DBA, Mississippi State University, 1982) is assistant professor of marketing, and Don W. Stacks (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1978) is associate professor of communication at the University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama 36688. This research was supported by a grant from the University of South Alabama Research Committee (#3-61245).

CS 207512

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION APPRHENSION III: TREATMENT

OF WRITING APPREHENSION IN THE CLASSROOM

ABSTRACT

A multidimensional model of writing apprehension developed by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally is discussed and possible pedagogical implications outlined. Treatment of writing apprehension in the classroom is suggested according to the five factors identified as composing the construct, writing apprehension, and according to the syntactic language variables significantly predicting writing apprehension. Treatment in the classroom suggested included a pedagogoical orientation which focuses on the writing process more than the writing product and on the rhetorical dimensions of situation, audience and purpose which give meaning to any writing task.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION III: TREATMENT

OF WRITING APPREHENSION IN THE CLASSROOM

The major instrument used to ascertain written communication apprehension has been that developed by Daly and Miller.[1] The model it provides for writing apprehension is unidimensional, i.e., the problem of helping writers with problems related to writing apprehension has been presented as a matter of identifying a simple phenomenon. However, recently Daly has offered a broader view of writing attitude and beliefs in which writing apprehension, defined as a unidimensional model, has proved to be a useful but limited attitude or belief about writing.[2] Two important complications are revealed by Daly's observation. First, there is the observation that the current working definition of writing apprehension is limited, particularly in terms of a diagnostic device that can produce a range of useful predictors for treatment. Second, there is the equally important observation that the concept of writing aprehension -- either the unidimensional model developed by Daly and Miller or the more recent multidimensional model developed by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally[3] -- is a subset of a broader set of writing attitudes and beliefs. This broader set is defined as the writing process, a complex and pedagogically enabling set of attitudes and beliefs about the creative act of writing which has been developed in the field of composition studies over the past quarter of a century. The "writing process" is, to borrow Kuhn's terms, the "paradigm" upon which current composition studies rest.

In broad terms, the writing process is viewed as a series of steps taken by the writer in creating a composition of any kind.[4] Generally, three steps are outlined: pre-writing, drafting, and revising/editing. While the process is presented in linear terms, indicating that the writer

follows the three steps sequentially in time, the process is not rigidly sequential. Rather, it is recursive, that is, the writer often returns to an earlier step. For example, a writer engaged in the editing step may return to the pre-writing step to reconsider the situation, the audience, and/or the purpose of the writing task. Similarly, a writer engaged in drafting a piece of writing may consciously stop from time to time to edit or re-write a sentence or two, polishing the product along the road to completing it. Finally, while many practitioners who teach the "writing process" stress the third step as one of revision as much as of editing, it is generally assumed that writers will have one of two composing styles.[5] Some writers will go through many drafts, while other writers will do most or all of their pre-writing in their minds rather than on paper, and these latter composers will do no more than edit their draft for matters of genre and conventions of style.

Given this broad outline of the writing process, it is clear that a unidimensional model of writing apprehension will thwart both diagnosis and treatment of a particular writer's problem. Provisionally, diagnosis would be focused on one of the three steps of the process, and writing apprehension would take different forms according to the writer's problem at a certain stage in the process. For example, "writer's block" at the pre-writing step might be treated differently than the same phenomenon at the revising/editing step. Complex phenomena may also be diagnosed: a writer with apprehension about correct English usage may not write at all, yet the problem is not with the first step, pre-writing, but with the last one, revising/editing. If the writer is taught to view editing as a matter to be dealt with later, the writer may begin to generate notes or other forms of writing appropriate to the pre-writing stage.

The classroom setting for teaching the writing process is often the "workshop" in which the attention and energy of all members of the class, including the instructor, is focused on the production of texts. Often, the instructor writes the same assignment that is assigned to the students and equally often the class engages in peer-critiquing of compositions. In those cases where the instructor writes with the class, the instructor's work is critiqued along with that of the students. The identification of this method as a "workshop" is obvious when the situation is compared to that in a studio class in artistic compostion, where the instructor is the master whose performance is before the students who judge their own work by comparison to that of the instructor. When the pedagogy of the writing process is placed in the workshop situation, the instructor must provide the exemplar of excellence. This methodology is recently finding favor in the teaching of business writing, replacing the model of presentation of canned formulae and rigid prescriptions which offer the student the equivalent of a "paint-by-the-numbers" course in artistic composition.

METHOD

The multidimensional model of writing apprehension proposed by Boozer, Lally, and Stacks[6] identifies six factors as composing the constuct of which five have some demonstrated predictive ability

- Blank Page Paralysis
- General Writing Affect
- Positive/Negative Business Affect
- Attitude Toward Writing Competence
- Attitude Toward Professional Writing Skills
- Alternative Modes

Additionally, these five factor were found by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally[7] to have syntactic language variables significantly predicting writing apprehension:

- Negative Qualification
- Negative Audience Perception
- Use of Motion Language (active voice yielding less apprehension)
- Past Time Tense
- Conditionality (conditionality being associated with less apprehension)

Results of a correlation of the five factors with the five syntactic language variables are interesting and provide the first step in treating writing apprehension. The method employed here in is to treat the syntactic data generated by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally as a pedagogical matter of teaching skills in writing. For example, the data show that, as the frequency of subjects and objects of verbs which are second-person in nature and perceived negatively increased, so too did attitudes toward professional writing skills (negative audience perception correlated with negative attitude toward professional writing skills). Because the use and frequency of second-person subjects and objects of verbs is a matter that will often depend on the rhetorical aspects of a writing task (situation, audience, and purpose), the correlation can be misleading. In some cases it might be appropriate; however, if a writer typically relies on one syntactic pattern, then that writer's skills in creating a variety of sentences should be enhanced. It is likely that an apprehensive writer will rely on rigid patterns of syntax, using the same patterns regardless of the rhetorical considerations of the writing task. Thus syntactical exercises will be

considered separately from the five factors.

The five factors will be considered from two points of view. First, the factors will be related to the writing process. Secondly, the factors will be considered in light of current practices reported to be useful in treatment of writing apprehension.

DISCUSSION

Discussion will focus briefly on the treatment of problems with syntactic fluency and then turn to the treatment of writing apprehension according to the five factors of the construct.

Treatment of Problems with Syntactic Fluency

Faigley, Daly, and Witte found that indices measuring syntactic development were also affected by writing apprehension.[8] Specifically, they found significant differences in syntactic "fluency" or "maturity" as measured by the length of T-units[9] and clause length between high and low apprehension writers. The notion of syntactic "fluency" is pedagogically more useful than that of "maturity" when treating the need for improvement of skills; simply stated, syntactic fluency is the measure of variety and complexity in a writer's syntax. Obviously, the writer who is capable of generating a wide variety of sentences of varying degrees of complexity will be better prepared for specific writing tasks than a writer whose syntactic repertoire is limited to a few patterns to which the writer rigidly adheres regardless of the parameters of the rhetorical situation. Syntactic "maturity" is a complex judgment about the success the writer achieves in using appropriate and effective sentence structures to satisfy the rhetorical demands of a particular writing task.

Treatment of problems of syntactic fluency can be focused on such exercises as sentence-combining, an accepted pedagogical tool widely in use

in compostion studies. In this treatment mode exercises are structured so that the range of variety and complexity in syntax is employed by the writer in the process of making new sentences. The "fluency" achieved by the writer is carried over into the writing process generally. Specifically, writers can be encouraged to engage in sentence-combining while transforming their notes and other pre-writing materials into draft, and they can also be encouraged to exercise their new skill when they engage in revising and/or editing their drafts. In other words, once the writer learns the skill of sentence-combining, the writer can use it to transform his or her own sentences into those of a complex and variable kind of structure. Because of the correlation between problems with syntax and writing apprehension, sentence-combining exercises would appear to be appropriate for all writers with high apprehension.

Treatment of Writing Apprehension

Boozer, Lally, and Stacks present a six factor model of writing apprehension that provides both a diagnostic and treatment paradigm.[10] The five factors found to relate to syntactic language choice vary from more general topics of apprehension to the more specific business application; as such, certain pedagogical strategies might prove useful to reduce felt anxiety or apprehension.[11] The following section examines such contributions and specific method of "treatment."

"General Affect Toward Writing" in general provides a framework for discussion; writing instructors would find it desirable if their students agreed or even strongly agreed with these statements on the instrument designed by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally[12]: "I enjoy writing." "I like to write my ideas down." "Writing is a lot of fun." "I look forward to writing down my ideas." "I like seeing my thoughts on paper."

Scott and Wheeless demonstrated that a course syllabus should not be modified to fit specific treatment of anxiety about communication.[13] In other words, a communications course should not be designed as a clinic in which apprehension is treated. Rather, the course should be designed according to a sound pedagogy that will take into account the writing process and will create a learning situation in which apprehension is least likely to be heightened. Clifford demonstrates that this pedagogy will, in addition to its focus on process rather than product, employ a facilitating instead of a directing teaching role.[14] Clifford's pedagogy includes sharply reducing teacher evaluation of writing and establishing a supportive classroom atmosphere by establishing a collaborative composing method. This method includes free-writing (a pre-writing or invention technique), small group responses (peer response to writing instead of teacher evaluation), and generally shared responsibility among the students to respond to both student and teacher writing. This pedagogy does not eliminate evaluation of student writing by the instructor, but it does place such evaluation at the end of the composing process -- in other words, helping the student to learn to write by offering help at the moment the writer needs it.[15] Intervention in the process occurs constantly; evaluation occurs once the process is completed.

Mueller provides a strategy for creating a supportive environment, including the necessity for positive feed-back during the process (compliments are highly valued by all student writers, particularly so by highly apprehensive writers); revision opportunities which can incorporate peer and teacher feed-back; selective marking of errors and recognition of the efficacy of error in the learning process generally, and a respect for confidentiality about errors.[16] This last suggestion is part of what

Mueller calls a treatment strategy to reduce the power of the "over-developed monitor" which inhibits highly apprehensive writers who are preoccupied with matters of correct usage. Mueller advocates focused free-writing at the pre-writing stage of the process as an excellent means of subverting the power of the over-developed monitor; in focused free-writing, the writer is to write constantly and without lifting the pencil or pen from the paper for a set time period (usually 5-10 minutes). Rico and Claggett lend extensive support to Mueller's observation that the pre-writing exercise called "clustering" will enable apprehensive writers -- all writers, in fact -- to engage the right hemisphere of the brain as a means of getting started in a writing task.[17] Rico and Claggett write:

> The predilection of the right hemisphere for complex wholes throws light on its interpretive ability with respect to language. . . . But its linguistic abilities differ radically from the left hemisphere's linguistic abilities: left-hemisphere use of language is explanatory, literal, fixed; it conveys information in specific, unambiguous ways as, for example, in "a star is a large, self-luminous heavenly body.". . . The aspects of language depending on the flash-like illumination of a totality seem to be the province of the right hemisphere. . . . Thus, spoken or printed words can evoke a complex of associations in the right hemisphere, forming a pattern, a Gestalt, an image.[18]

"Blank Page Paralysis" is a phenomenon to which the pre-writing techniques of free-writing, focused free-writing, using the journalistic questions of who-what-when-where-why-and-how, and clustering provide useful treatment. The items concerning blank page paralysis can all point to problems at the pre-writing stage of the process, although it is dangerous

to over-simplify the problem and the possibility of an "over-developed monitor" should always be considered: "My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition." "I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas." "I find it difficult to organize my thoughts on paper." "I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course." "I'm nervous about writing."

Putz offers a pedagogical model based on transactional analysis which can free the apprehensive writer.[19] First, the writer writes for one's self and the audience, then for a live audience of one's peers in the class, and then for the "real" world through some sort of publication (such as a letter to an editor, though for students in business writing courses an audience of local people in business would be, perhaps, more appropriate). Putz's pedagogy is very similar to that commonly employed in developmental writing courses in which, first, the writer writes about him or herself for one's self; secondly, about one's self for a live audience of peers in the class; and lastly, about a topic not directly or necessarily personal for the peers in the class. In this commonly accepted teaching strategy, the writer is taken through stages from writing about one's self for one's self, to, finally, writing about something else for somebody else, a jouney from writer- to reader-based prose. Such models as those of Putz or of the typical developmental writing course can free the apprehensive writer of blank-page paralysis because the student's first task is to write about something the writer knows well for an audience the writer can trust.

Not all writing instructors offering couses in business writing may be able to adopt a pedagogy such as that described above; however, such instruction can be appropriately carried on in a writing laboratory. Harris describes a procedure for an in-take interview at a writing laboratory at

Purdue University which includes a list of questions similar to those developed by Stacks, Boozer, and Lally.[20] This instrument may be an appropriate adjunct to such an in-take interview. For business writing instructors who may be reluctant to consider the kind of pedagogy described in this paper, the work of Fox is relevant; Fox reports that the workshop method produces as good a product as the conventional lecture and discussion method, but reduces writing apprehension at the same time.[21] In other words, the product does not decrease in quality with the workshop method. Powers work supports that of Fox; Powers demonstrates that traditional composition instructional strategies actually increase writing apprehension.[22] The writing instructor with the greatest range of pedagogical resources will probably be successful; therefore, the writing laboratory should be viewed as a supplement to the workshop-based course in business writing rather than a clinic for treatment of writing apprehension. Students with high and low writing apprehension can learn many important skills in the laboratory setting.

"Postitive/Negative Business Affect," "Attitude Toward Writing Competence," and "Attitude Toward Professional Writing Skills:" these factors appear to cluster together when viewed from the point of view of treatment. Generally the questions on the writing apprehension instrument focus on the enjoyment the writer anticipates in the process of writing business communication documents, the confidence the writer takes to these tasks, and the value the writer believes writing will possess in the professional world of business.

If the writer takes pleasure in writing tasks in general, then he or she should enjoy those tasks specific to the professional affairs of the world of business. Thus, if the writing student takes courses in general

composition and in business writing that are based on the pedagogy advocated in this paper, the likelihood that the writer will enjoy the task of writing is increased. A workshop method which reduces the opportunities for stimulation of apprehension about writing will also enhance the writer's confidence.

The writer's relation to the world of business in an important feature of the picture for the high apprehensive writer as well as for the student of business writing generally. Perhaps the best means to forge a link between student and the "real world" of business is through the case method. A case is a description of a writing task, including the situation, the audience, and the purpose. The "case method" has a long and successful history as a device of legal eduction, as well as use in teaching management in business education. The case makes good sense as a tool for teaching the business writer who, in addition to knowing the customs of genre and conventions of style for letters and memoranda and other forms of business communication, must also be able to recognize, analyze, and respond to the rhetorical dimensions of a writing task. No professional of the business world is told, "Hand in an essay on a topic of your choice by tomorrow at noon," but by the same token there is vastly more to successful business writing in the real world that the mechanical use of formulae and "paint-by-the-numbers" directions for a piece of correspondence.

The workshop pedagogy and the case method work well together; the students can begin their writing task by engaging in a peer critique of the case, identifying the special features of the situation, the audience, and the purpose. Then, they can work independently to organize their own thoughts as an extension of the pre-writing activity, and make a first draft of the appropriate written response to the case. Next, the students engage

in a peer review of the drafts, in which the instructor participates as both teacher and writer. Finally, the students individually return their drafts to make revisions and to edit into a final form, which the instructor evaluates. The process in the classroom will demonstrate clearly that professional writing skills are demanded (and therefore rewarded) in the real world of business; the process should also increase the writer's view of his or her own competence, and can contribute to a developing awareness of the pleasures of good writing.

SUMMARY

Implications for treatment of writing apprehension can be focused on specific pedagogical strategies if the writing apprehension is defined by the instrument of Stacks, Boozer, and Lally.[23] Because syntax is generally a problem for high apprehensive writers, sentence-combining exercises seem appropriate for all writers so identified. Similarly, a general pedagogy based on the writing process, the workshop method, and the case which describes a writing task, seems an appropriate strategy for treating writing apprehension. Certain aspects of the pedagogy do appear to address certain factors, and thus special attention can be paid to certain kinds of problems associated with writing apprehension. The instrument is valuable because it provides a multidimensional construct of writing apprehension, and this construct indicates that writing apprehension needs to be treated broadly rather than as a narrow problem such as "writer's block."

REFERENCES

1. John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller, "The Empirical Development of an Instrument to Measure Writing Apprehension," Research in the Teaching of English, 9 (1975), 242-249.

2. John A. Daly, "Writing Apprehension," TS, Department of Speech Communication, University of Texas at Austin, 1983.

3. Robert W. Boozer, Tim D. P. Lally, and Don W. Stacks, "Written Communication Apprehension I: What is it and How Can it be Measured?" submitted to Journal of Business Communication; Don W. Stacks, Robert W. Boozer, and Tim D. P. Lally, "Written Communication Apprehension II: Predictive Models of Language Use," sumitted to Journal of Business Communication.

4. Sharon Crowley, "Components of the Composing Process," College Composition and Communication, 28 (1977), 166-169.

5. Rory D. Stephens, "Variations in Composing Styles," Journal of Advanced Composition, 2 (1981), 45-52.

6. Boozer, Stacks, and Lally.

7. Stacks, Boozer, and Lally.

8. Lester Faigley, John A. Daly, and Stephen P. Witte, "Role of Writing Apphrension in Performance and Competence," Journal of Educational Research, 75 (1981), 16-21.

9, A t-unit is "one main clause plus any subordinate clause or nonclausal structure that is attached [to] or embedded in it." Kellogg W. Hunt, Syntactic Maturity in School Children and Adults, 35, No. 1, Monographs for the Society for Research in Child Development (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 4.

10. Boozer, Stacks, and Lally.

11. Stacks, Boozer, and Lally.

12. Boozer, Lally, and Stacks.

13. Michael D. Scott and Lawrrence R. Wheeless, "Communication Apprehenion, Student Attitudes, and Levels of Satisfaction," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 17 (1977), 188-198.

14. John Clifford, "Composing in Stages: The Effects of Collborative Pedagogy," Research in the Teaching of English, 15 (1981), 37-53.

15. James Sledd, "Linguistics, Obeah, Acupunture, and the Teaching of Writing by That Bastard Sledd," Journal of Advanced Composition, 2 (1981), 147-152.

16. Roger C. Mueller, "Writing Apphrehension: Causes and Cures," American Business Communication Association, New Orleans, October, 1982.

17. Gabrielle Lusser Rico and Mary Francis Claggett, Balancing the Hemispheres: Brain Research and the Teaching of Writing (n.p.: University of California-Berkeley Bay Area Writing Project Curriculum Publication No. 14, 1980).

18. Rico and Claggett, 8.

19. J. M. Putz, "Permission + Protection = Potency," College English, 37 (1975), 571-575.

20. Muriel Harris, "Individualized Diagnosis: Teaching for Causes Not Symptoms of Writing Deficiences," American Business Communication Association, New Orleans, October, 1982.

21. Roy F. Fox, "Treatment of Writing Apprehension and Its Effects on Composition," Research in the Teaching of English, 14 (1980), 39-49.

22. William G. Powers, "The Effect of Compulsory Writing on Writing Apprehension," Research in the Teaching of English, 13 (1979), 225-230.

23. Boozer, Lally, and Stacks; Stacks, Boozer, and Lally.